

Ein bischen "bi" schadet nie: The German-Dutch Army Corps

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Merger

"Dutchmen? If there were 80 million of them as well, they would be worse than the Germans."
"Germans are this and Germans are that....., except for the ones I know!"
"Een + Eins = three."
"Bin bischen 'bi' schadet nie."

Just a sample of the statements from military personnel who since 31 August 1995 belong to the bi-national Army Corps Staff. Daily before D-day, Lt Gen Reitsma talked about a merger. An apposite word, because a merger entails parent organizations amalgamating into a new organization. This paper takes a close-up look at the process.

Take, for instance, the melting of two metals into an alloy. An alloy may have many advantages over the use of a pure metal. The material may be stronger or may be easier to process. But a number of conditions have to be met to bring about a sound alloy. The right temperature has to be achieved, and there has to be good fusion. If all we do is stick the metals together, the result is a botched job that readily disintegrates because the properties of the metal are not consistent throughout. An alloy consequently only has advantages if it is created in a technically correct way. For, although the properties of the original materials can no longer be immediately traced, their specific qualities still contribute to the new material.

A similar process is facing the leadership of 1 (GE/NL) Corps in Munster. The alloy we are talking about is that of 350 Dutch and German military personnel who together, on an equal footing, are in charge of the troops who belong to the new Army Corps. The posts have been fairly divided, the location is German, the first commander is Dutch and the official language is English.

The question here is what factors have a favorable impact on the fusion so that the desired amalgam is created. Of course we would prefer to design a series of tests to discover what these are. Unfortunately, in our case, we would meet with practical and ethical objections. We are, however, able to resort to our own research and the experiences of Enka-Glanzstoff (1969), Fokker-VWF/DASA (1969-1995), Hoogovens-Hoesch (1972-1982) and other literature and research.

We cannot present here the analysis we made in early 1995 because of lack of space. I shall briefly, however, describe the plan of action and then go into more detail on our findings to date.

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EFFECTIVENESS

Three things are needed at least if an arbitrary group of people is to function together productively, whether it is a national or a bi-national group:

- clear goals and tasks,
- competent individuals, and
- optimum cooperation

The first two aspects are usually adequately addressed. That was also so in our case, Mission, Table of Organization and Equipment, Technical Arrangements, doctrine and regulations were worked out in detail. Suitable individuals were selected, trained, assigned functions and placed. It was all recorded precisely in a

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voluminous Realization Report. Many personnel for example attended an additional English or German course. But knowledge of the language alone of course is no guarantee for effective communication. The group aspect also requires a structural approach. The fact is that it is never wise to leave something as important as this to chance, let alone the launch of a new bi-cultural, trilingual team. Experiences in the Royal Netherlands Army (RNLA) reveal that team building diminishes the chance of dysfunction, absenteeism and stress and enhances the chance of higher performance.

But when is cooperation or integrated team work successful? How do we know whether a merger is successful? How do we know if the new group is functioning effectively? What do we mean by effectiveness? We can explain the concept of effectiveness or group effectiveness in terms of three dimensions.

Knowledge

Team members need to know the goals, each other and the work. It is imperative for team members to possess knowledge about the bi-national method of working within their own area of work. Nor is knowledge of national policy strategies out of place. That level of knowledge sometimes proves low: only 2% of Dutch personnel for example had heard of the reorganization of the Bundeswehr. By the reverse token, only 26% of German officers were aware of the reorganization of the RNLA. To begin with, too, personal acquaintance left something to be desired. 91% of the Germans and 62% of the Dutch agreed with the statement: *"There are team members who I don't know very well yet"*. Knowledge about the differences and similarities between the two cultures, military or otherwise, -- that is to say: values, norms and behavioral codes -- is equally desirable. Not as a goal in itself but as a means to an end.

Procedures

Methods of working in operational action, decision-making, language, mandating, situation evaluation and CP doctrine, personal appraisals, traditions, protocols, evaluations, internal service and computer use, are established in detail in an effective team. Account sometimes has to be taken of inevitable national criteria. Even though the motto is: as 'bi' as possible. The Realization Report and the Technical Arrangements were major steps in this direction.

Interaction

The way in which people get on together, take decisions, lead others, write letters, exchange ideas, is also a determining factor in the effectiveness of a group. Interaction primarily has to do with the degree to which a cooperative atmosphere of mutual trust prevails. Polarization, a phenomenon that was fairly functional in the negotiating phase, is of course counter-productive in the operational situation.

In the initial stages, 50% of German military personnel and only 17% of Dutch military personnel agreed that there was "a good team spirit". This emerges from the questionnaire set in May, June and July 1995 among the freshly arrived staff from Munster. The response from Munster to the statement: *"There is mutual trust in the team"* was:

	GE	NL
disagree	1.3	1.9
disagree a little	6.4	7.5
disagree/do not disagree	50.0	45.3
agree a little	33.3	41.5
agree	9.0	3.8

It is striking, incidentally, that Eibergen, where the smaller Staff of Command Support Group was composed in what is for both a new location, is much more advanced as regards group cohesion.

Other aspects affecting the merger are:

The process of change

Both armed forces are in the middle of a process of change: the RNLA is changing from a conscript and regular army to an all-volunteer force (in Germany the debate is also underway). Down-sizing, improved business operations, ADED, Innere Führung, changing conditions of employment are the issues. It is important to ascertain at an early stage whether the two armed forces enterprises are on the same track in these domains.

Equal footing

Cooperation is being organized on an equal footing. In business and industry, mergers are the very things that require a more laborious and lengthy process of integration than the majority of take-overs, because the relationship is symmetrical and the key issue is cooperation. It apparently helps when a bi-national company is set up on an equal footing in the form of a fifty-fifty deal (Steward, 1990). This also applies in our case. But is there also *de facto* parity? What is the situation for example with the status of the 6th and 7th (GE) division? Munster, moreover, is German territory, Eibergen, Dutch. And that has numerous practical, legal and psychological consequences, for one thing with regard to internal service, staffing, infrastructure and legal position. For example Dutch personnel (52%) in Munster think that *"they have to adjust more than the Germans"*. 80% of the Germans say that this statement isn't true.

What about the Netherlands' political and economic dependence on its big brother? Reference is sometimes made to the CALIMERO effect in this respect (I'm small and he's big and that's not fair); taken from a Dutch children's TV program.

Self-interest

The degree and duration of the integration aimed at is unique. People have to adjust because a major primary group -- the immediate working environment -- changes in the event of a merger. That creates uncertainty. People have a natural antipathy to change and will endeavor to retain what is familiar as much as possible. Both parties have this tendency. It's not an easy thing to suddenly find that you can no longer regard your own values and codes of behavior as the only right ones. Working with two truths sometimes takes a bit of getting used to. We know that trust and integration have to come from two sides, *Committate Valemus*, strong together! On the other hand, there is nothing wrong with having one's own national identity. The Eagle and the Lion. Consequently, a healthy balance has to be struck between the interests of the bi-national working situation and the interests that are served by adhering to one's own national values and norms.

Resistance

The last, but certainly not the least important factor, is that the decision to set up a bi-national Army Corps was a political one. The need did not arise on the shop floor. And that can sow a seed of dissent. For 1 (GE/NL) Corps in itself does not serve any political goal. The Army Corps first and foremost has to be operational as part of the Main Defence Force. For this purpose tasks, individuals, structure and culture have to be optimally geared to one another. And frequently that can be done much more smoothly with a single nationality rather than with two nationalities!

One can gather from these general considerations that the merger process is all-embracing. But just as with the process of producing an alloy from two metals, we can ask ourselves a number of specific questions such as: What are the success factors? What are the causes and repercussions of any failure? What properties do the raw materials have? What are the features of the melting process and what are the features of the final product? How can we get around or solve technical problems? Clearly in setting up 1 (GE/NL) Corps, Standing Orders, a little more tolerance or a little more detailed briefing, will not suffice.

TEAM BUILDING

The best approach to a bi-cultural merger is to bring together all those involved, literally and figuratively. To this end a workshop was designed in which the bi-national teams participated.

When looking for a suitable location we decided to opt for the Europa Institute in Bocholt. One of the main tasks of this institute is to support German-Dutch integration processes. Moreover, the institute is not far from Munster nor from the Dutch border. The most relevant aspects of integration had to be given priority in the workshops. But what were the priorities? What needed to be worked on most urgently? The experiences, expectations and opinions on bi-national cooperation were requested in 50 semi-structured interviews with German and Dutch officers and NCOs. Views were collected on the reason for the existence and functioning of the bi-national staff, impressions of the other nationality and of cooperation and expectations or experiences with using German and

English as languages. Lastly, an inventory was made of ideas or wishes for the team building workshop. Transcriptions were made of the interviews recorded on tape for further analysis. A questionnaire set at the start of the workshop provided additional verification of where attention had to be focused. Ultimately the priorities were:

- to develop openness and sensibility to the practical aspects of intercultural cooperation
- internal communication and use of language
- politico-historical background to relations between the Netherlands and Germany
- knowledge of the background to the origin and the reason for the existence of 1 (GE/NL) Corps
- insight into the practical aspects of the new working situation
- to become acquainted and hold informal get-togethers

Headquarters 1 (GE/NL) Corps took part in the team building in Bocholt in May, June and July 1995 with 13 organizational teams. HQ Command Support Group Eibergen attended the workshop in October. Lastly, Commanding General Lt. Gen. R. Reitsma held a special brain-storming session with his generals and colonels from Munster. Key aspects here were the lessons learned, the reciprocal role expectations within the management team and information on earlier team building efforts.

FINDINGS

People are optimistic. In Munster and Eibergen they expect the merger will be a success. It is summer 1995. Many believe that cooperation will grow on the job as it were. One or two people actually deny that any problems could possibly exist. The English language will prove to be a difficult issue, they expect. Time will tell. In any event there is a great deal of respect for each other's professionalism.

The impressions and expectations of the Dutch of their German colleagues are varied and detailed. Germans are *punktlisch*, bureaucratic and hierarchically oriented. There are regulations, protocols and clear power structures. This prompts nostalgic associations among some of the Dutch. Some of the Dutch actually long for German clarity and sound discipline. Although it's strange that German officers keep the door of their office shut, we can learn a lot from the way the Germans work, is what many Dutch personnel think. Others think that their German colleagues are a little old-fashioned.

No explicit picture emerges of what the Germans think of the Dutch *Machbarn*. The Dutch are very similar to the Germans, aren't they? What is strange is that Dutch military personnel are allowed to have long hair. But even so the Germans prefer the Dutch as partners in this merger to any other European nationality. They are sometimes surprised when they realize that this German optimism is not automatically reciprocated, but that in the Netherlands there can also be feelings of jealousy and resentment. The notorious Clingendael study and the *Ich bin wutend* campaign delivered a collective shock to the Germans. The media in both countries have again been rubbing salt in the wound of late by playing up all the sensitivities and cultural differences. The press usually gets the blame while people in Apeldoorn and Munster like to play down the unpleasant facts. Practically all the respondents say no when asked whether the German and Dutch military personnel of Corps Headquarters have an accurate impression of each other. People are apparently aware of the fact that prejudices can play a role in their dealings with one another. A minority, 20% of the Dutch and 26% of the Germans, think that prejudices are not important.

The responses after the bi-national workshops are positive. Participants think that the team building is useful for various reasons. This emerges from the written questionnaire that was set in cooperation with the psychologists of the *Streitkräfteamt*. There are of course points of criticism here and there. Adjustments were made to the program where possible.

Personal acquaintance and the generation of a sense of belonging and team spirit are regarded as vital. The same goes for getting to know each other's background, organization and method of work. *Man muss andere kennen lernen, um sich selbst zu kennen*, was one of the proverbial responses. The close attention to intercultural communication proved to be highly functional. People perceived it as useful, above all, to be made aware of the sensitivities, stereotypes, irritations and prejudices. This was because cooperation is facilitated by developing a common feeling and a sensibility to the fact that people are different. When national stereotypes, sensitive clichés and mutual irritations can be discussed without any qualms, cultural differences can be put into perspective as can delicate issues such as the Second World War. This creates an atmosphere of relief and friendship. People can then have a good laugh about the reciprocal jokes and the prejudices, quasi or otherwise. The more informal parts of the program certainly help here. Moreover, the workshops resulted in an inventory of points of attention.

The following points of attention consequently are a summary of what the participants themselves, the Dutch and the Germans, put forward. The biggest common denominator has been extracted and where possible supported with research findings. It is a sketch of the initial situation when the Corps was launched. It will be clear that the Staff in Munster is not standing still, but is evolving daily.

Degree and rate of integration

The concept of *integration* is defined in two ways. There is a German and a Dutch interpretation.

The following metaphor makes it clear. The Dutch, as it were, made a successful landing with their Boeing 747. The aircraft is fueled, checked and stocked. People now embark, spruce and tidy, ready for the next flight. The Germans, in contrast, have the feeling that after a brief touch-down during which suddenly half of the passengers had to jump out, the aircraft immediately has to take off again. There is no time to recuperate. The aircraft seems as if it has been hijacked and even so, just as much work still has to be done with the remaining half of the passengers. That's not fair. The Streitkräfteamt, Heeres Führung Kommando and the three (GE) Divisions, moreover, are not taking into sufficient account the reduced capacity of the fresh staff at Hindenburgplatz. Nor can the Dutch take over the work of the German 1 Korps because of course they are not sufficiently familiar with it. Admittedly they offer to help out but at crucial junctures they are absent as a result of leave or meetings in the Netherlands. The Germans are convinced that they have to work twice as hard as the Dutch because of the reductions in manpower on the German side and because of the extra workload arising from the 6th and 7th (GE) Division. This view is connected with the fact that they frequently see their tasks in Munster as separate from those of the Dutch. They have an integration model in mind in which national structures and responsibilities tend more to coexist -- a co-location in other words. The Dutch would prefer to share the total quantity of work: as 'bi' as possible, as national as necessary, is the Dutch motto.

Just as the degree of integration differs, so too the opinion as to the rate with which the common military enterprise has to be created. The Germans say that certainly another three years will be necessary after 31 August 1995 to actually bring about the bi-national staff. They seem surprised that the hasty Dutch are actually now moving in with them. They feel as if they've been taken rather unawares by the fact that their German Korps is ceasing to exist, while the 6th and 7th (GE) Division continue to do urgent work. It is understandable consequently that the bi-national work sometimes goes by the board. Nevertheless, the Dutch think that on 19 July 1995, the original launch date, the whole affair has to be operational, complete, ready for the start. That is and remains the planning and the challenge. Preparations can't be put off to the distant future. This is the opinion of the generally single-minded and energetic Dutch. They applied for a post in Munster ages ago, they are leaving Apeldoorn behind them and are mentally completely focused on the new 'binat'.

Generating sympathy for the two points of view constitutes the bases for joint willingness to tackle the workload. Naturally, both German and Dutch military personnel only entertain professional motives. Jointly working out job descriptions may meet the need for better coordination of (bi)national tasks, responsibilities and competencies. The will is present. As the following statement bears witness: *"We shouldn't just be involved in 'binat' we should be committed to it."* To explain the difference think of a breakfast of bacon and eggs: the chicken is involved but the pig is committed.

Language

Only 19% of the Germans and 8% of the Dutch military personnel involved agree with the statement: *"This team has very poor command of the English language"*. English as the *lingua franca* proved feasible in the majority of workshops. But only if people consistently did their best to speak English. Because some of them don't want to or can't, conversations tend to lapse frequently into the Rudi Carrell model: German. Both the Dutch and the Germans regularly have recourse to this. The Dutch because they themselves prefer German or easily lapse into it. By contrast, passive knowledge of English in many cases proved to be better than the people in question originally thought. Practice makes perfect. But speaking English for many -- Germans and Dutch -- still proves difficult, certainly if one is not used to speaking a foreign language uninhibitedly. The Dutch give the impression that they are a little less afraid to make mistakes than their German colleagues. The Germans, as regards their use of English, are more circumspect. Opinions are divided on the statement: *"English causes more misunderstandings than German"*. But German colleagues agree with the statement more frequently than their Dutch colleagues.

	GE	NL	
disagree	8.3	18.2	
disagree a little	25.0	27.3	
disagree/do not disagree	15.5	27.3	
agree a little	38.1	23.6	
agree	<u>13.1</u>	<u>3.6</u>	
	100%	100%	N = 137

Some Dutch personnel are annoyed by the fact that many German comrades take it for granted that the Dutch speak German anyway. A number of Germans are annoyed that Dutch colleagues are sometimes *unhöflich* because they make no allowances for the Germans who can't follow their English.

Once people are aware of these barriers they can reach agreements. The agreements are:

- speak slowly and KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid),
- give a summary every quarter of an hour,
- give plenty of opportunity for questions to make things clear,
- possibly give a summary in German so that there is a ratio of 80% English - 20% German,
- allow participants who only have a good passive command of English to express themselves in their own language,
- have a person with a weaker command of a language flanked by someone who can translate,
- confirm oral agreements in writing (fax, notes, letter or E-mail), and
- always follow up a letter or fax with a telephone call or visit.

These points were discussed in the workshop and communication skills were practiced. In Munster English should be spoken as consistently as possible without losing sight of Höflichkeit.

Management style

The way German and Dutch military personnel work varies, as do their views as to what results in quality and how.

This emerges in a number of management aspects:

- German military personnel have less mandate compared to their Dutch colleagues. Their scope is usually more accurately defined but as a result relatively limited. The Dutch have more mandate, more freedom and enjoy the confidence of their superior to act independently and actually even make their own decisions on some occasions. They improvise, act as the occasion demands and take a lot of initiative and sometimes also risks. They are encouraged to do so by means of the more result-oriented style of leadership. This *Auftragstaktik* -- in the Netherlands they talk about acting on one's own initiative and mutual confidence - is also being taken out of the moth balls in the Bundeswehr. But both the Dutch and the German participants in the workshops think that frequently a *Befehlstaktik* prevails in the Bundeswehr which allows little scope for learning from mistakes. There is greater emphasis on directly complying with rules and procedures. One repercussion can be that the Germans display more risk-avoidance behavior than their Dutch colleagues. But the Dutch like to interfere in everything, also in things for which they have no responsibility or with which they are only involved on the sidelines.

- The Dutch have a talking culture: at work they are geared to having a say and commitment. They are more orientated towards compromises and to solutions that everybody agrees with. A Dutch officer said during the workshop: "A good command is one to which everyone responds." And in the RNLA reference is made to participatory leadership and management by walking around, which certainly is not common practice at all in the Bundeswehr. German military personnel are more

directive and discuss less but on the other hand they have a much tighter allocation of competencies. For each post there are well-defined tasks and responsibilities are strictly allocated and put down in writing.

- The Germans accept a decision much more readily than the Dutch and are not constantly reverting to it. A good 'Befehl' is a 'Befehl' after all and the best thing it can do is indicate clearly and exactly what the management wants. The Dutch are not readily reconciled to a hierarchy and are not keen to accept arguments purely and solely because an authority says so. Knowledge, experience and example determine an officer's authority in the RNLA-- as a person. In the Bundeswehr it is the rank and the post that guarantee this more so than in the RNLA.

- In the Bundeswehr the problems usually end up where they ought to be. That makes things clear. If the Dutch put forward an issue they usually remain the owner of the problem and they will regularly inquire as to progress.

- In the Bundeswehr there is a much stricter distinction between *post* and *person*. Germans talk not so much on the strength of their personal views but rather as a person holding a particular post. In the RNLA the post and the person are seldom separate. There, more so than in Germany, it is the person that makes the post what it is. Moreover, the Germans on the whole are employed longer in a post and consequently they know the ropes.

- The Dutch sometimes do not know what to think of their German colleagues: are they expressing their own opinion or are they expressing the view of the Bundeswehr? As a Dutch person you're not likely to find out so easily what the background is to the German arguments.

- German officers and NCOs have better time management. They plan their activities accurately and well in advance. Agreements are complied with reliably and promptly. The Dutch by contrast think that they are still well on time even at the last minute.

- The talking culture of the RNLA emerges in the following: the Dutch drink a lot of coffee together. This usually involves social talk. But it also has a function, even though it is sometimes always open house in Dutch offices where the doors are always wide open. The Germans prefer not to be interrupted every other minute and are more inclined to plan an encounter well in advance. That works more effectively and more productively.

Whether the precise details tally or not, the main point is absolutely clear: the greater significance of hierarchy in the German organization compared to the Dutch organization. Military rank serves much more as a guarantee of authority in the Bundeswehr than in the RNLA. The Dutch derive their authority, as mentioned earlier, not solely from rank but also from competence. In Germany it goes without saying that somebody has the qualities that belong to a rank. The greater significance of hierarchy on the German side also explains the more frequent requests for permission, something which emerged strongly, notable during the negotiations. The clear allocation of competencies in the Bundeswehr and the longer holding of posts, as well as the separation between post and person, explain German officers; and NCOs' vast knowledge of rules and regulations. By contrast the Germans were often struck by the fact that Dutch personnel will often dispute or discuss a decision later on and will repeatedly revert to it, while usually it isn't even their responsibility.

Being able to handle these differences is a point of attention in the cooperative venture. The *Sinatra* approach ('I do it my way') must naturally be avoided at all costs.

Direct versus indirect

On the whole the Dutch are less direct in approaching a problem. They describe the situation, suggest what ought to happen and allow another to draw conclusions. The Dutch lobby and seek to gain support for their ideas at an early stage. But the request or the order often remains implicit. The Germans are more direct, they draw their own conclusions and direct an unambiguous request or an explicit order at the person in question.

Take the example of a journalist working for the daily newspaper the *NRC-Handelsblad*, who lived in Bonn and who had already often hinted to his newspaper kiosk owner that he would really very much like to be able to buy one or two Dutch newspapers there. Repeated mention produced no response. It was only when a German friend gave him the tip that he should direct an explicit request at the man ('Would you please see to it that there are two Dutch newspapers?') that he found two days later that his wishes had been met.

The difference in directness of approach was visible in the role play during the workshops on various occasions. This corresponds with recent research findings (W. Herrlitz & E. Loos, 1994). Thinking back to earlier events during cooperation in the beginning, misunderstandings can now be explained and feelings of irritation eliminated. Even with our first Dutch initiatives for the team building workshops, the tentative suggestion provoked no reaction from the German quarter. The typical Dutch lobby rapidly proved to be too round-about so that to begin with our intention was insufficiently clear to the Germans.

Posts

Most of the posts in the bi-national setting have not yet been given any clearly defined content. Although there are job descriptions and these are even fairly detailed on the German side, people frequently do not know what the work actually entails and which tasks are part of it or not. 46% of the Germans and 59% of the Dutch agreed with the statement: *"There are members of the team who are not clear what their work actually involves."* A considerable percentage, especially among the Dutch, disagrees with the statement: *"I know the guidelines and regulations that are needed to carry out my job."*

	GE	NL	
disagree	1.1	6.2	
disagree a little	9.2	20.0	
disagree/do not disagree	10.3	18.5	
agree a little	49.4	40.0	
agree	<u>29.9</u>	<u>15.4</u>	
	100%	100%	N = 137

The majority of the Dutch frequently do not yet know what exactly is expected of them. German colleagues stick as long as possible to the job content that had been established in detail before the merger or as this applied to I(GE) Corps. Responsibilities and competencies are quite often interpreted differently, frequently because national habits or interests are at stake. Only 10% of the Germans and 25% of the Dutch take the view that "the tasks in relation to each other are clearly demarcated".

	GE	NL	
disagree	7.5	10.7	
disagree a little	33.8	28.6	
disagree/do not disagree	48.8	35.7	
agree a little	7.5	19.6	
agree	<u>2.5</u>	<u>5.4</u>	
	100%	100%	N = 137

In short: fine coordination is lacking. Good job descriptions can make the work allocation clear and can clarify reciprocal expectations.

Dealing with each other

Codes of behavior in dealing with people vary. Americans for example frequently behave as if you're the best of

friends when you've only just met. This is how they cope with the problem of not knowing sufficiently what they are dealing with. They make social contacts quickly and easily. But these are superficial.

German behavior is based more on politeness and, on the whole, is more formal. Germans categorize their surroundings into family, close friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc. And there is a certain behavioral code that applies to each category. Normally colleagues are treated more aloofly than friends. It is regarded as impolite if one does not do so. On the other hand the third person singular 'Sie' by no means has the same detached significance as 'U' in Dutch. 'You' in this case is a good solution. People accept each other as they are and do not expect that colleagues will be continually touchy.

The Dutch by contrast lean more in the American direction. They are more internationally-orientated and have learned to get on with people easily. They are consequently a little more relaxed, more outspoken, more jovial and more informal to deal with. They are not afraid to make mistakes either in German or English. The *lockere* behavior of the Dutch is seen as liberating by many Germans, but not something that they would immediately want to imitate themselves. As many German as Dutch respondents, namely a minority of 25%, think that in Munster we are sometimes too *Hoflich* towards each other. Differences in the way people behave with each other emerge for one thing in *Duzen*, the daily shaking of hands which is usual in Germany and in the open doors which is the habit among the Dutch. The smaller social distance between officers and NCOs in the Royal Netherlands Army is equally an indicator of this kind. RNLA military personnel, moreover, are appreciably more used to female military personnel than their Bundeswehr colleagues.

Becoming aware of other ways of behaving avoids barriers or inhibitions to cooperation. Feeling for minor differences of this kind will also be useful in the future.

Raison d'etre

There is no unity of opinion as to the reason for the merger; neither on the German side nor on the Dutch side. Half of the respondents say that they are perfectly familiar with the goals and tasks of 1 (GE/NL) Corps. 56%, irrespective of nationality, disagreed with the statement: 'My team members fully support the founding of 1 (GE/NL) Corps.' Respondents do not yet agree as to the added value of the bi-national structure over the situation prior to the merger. 'Ein bisschen bi schadet nie', they say jokingly. 'OK, just a little bit, then' is the underlying tone. It perhaps can do no harm. But actually seeing, with enthusiasm, what the advantages are is something completely different. The reason for a bi-national Corps is consequently still not clear to many. Even so concrete objections to the merger are seldom expressed, probably because it is not regarded as *comme il faut*. People prefer to give socially desirable answers, was our impression. The evolution of thought in the past five years which led to the European political decision to set up a German-Dutch Corps is insufficiently familiar to those involved, as emerged from the interviews. There is skepticism. There is even serious misunderstanding as to who insisted on the merger, when and for what mysterious reasons. But a detailed explanation during the workshops cleared up a lot.

External relations

Lastly, the surroundings of the new Corps Staff constitute an important factor. The external relations of Munster have to get used to the idea that the staff at the Hindenburgplatz is now bi-national with all the accompanying practical consequences. The Heeres Fuhrungs Kommando (Koblenz), FuH (Bonn), CinC RNLA and RNLA staff (in the Hague), LANDCENT (NAVO) and both MODs (*Ministries of Defence*) have to learn that English is the *lingua franca* and that hi-national thinking goes on in Munster. The same applies to the Command Support Group and to the other sub-units of the Army Corps, including the 6th and 7th (GE) Divisions. Other sections of the RNLA and the Bundeswehr are increasingly being confronted with the consequences of the bi-national integration. They are having an impact in all fields: personnel, intelligence, security, training, logistics and IT. This requires some re-education and rethinking on how to maintain these external relationships. National considerations are no longer proving to be always and exclusively the deciding factor. And for many people that takes some getting used to.

RESUME

In Munster and Eibergen the post-merger phase is meanwhile in full swing. The elasticity and strength of the alloy must now emerge in the sections and divisions. Experiences from the early days, as it behooves a professional organization, have been carefully included in a melting pot from which a close knit Army Corps Staff is growing.

But of course it's all man-made. Even though we know the ingredients for the recipe for effective cooperation

there's bound to be occasional spills or something forgotten. Hence a double challenge still remains for HQ in Munster and Eibergen. On the one hand it is vital to remain receptive to other views, approaches or methods of working. The ability to listen and to be able to say at the right moment what the behavior of the other person does to you, keeps the relationship open. On the other hand the acquired knowledge, procedures and cooperative spirit have to be kept up to scratch and rapidly conveyed to new team members.

The fire under the melting pot has to be kept glowing so that cooperation can continue to proceed smoothly. Only then will the German-Dutch Army Corps be characterized by unity, flexibility and decisiveness. An example perhaps to other international military teams in a Europe in which peace and security have long ceased to be a national issue.



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